

Create a Vibrant Town Center

The Mayor and Council's most important policy initiative remains the successful redevelopment of Rockville's Town Center. The objective is to create a town center that will be the heart of the Rockville community and that will be distinctive, special and "uniquely Rockville."

Many of the Mayor and Council's desired outcomes for the next two years involve Phase I of Town Center: The 12-acre Town Square project, including the establishment of distinctly user-friendly parking options, construction of a new cultural arts center and the implementation of a comprehensive transportation plan.

The proposed FY 2005 budget includes sufficient funds to pursue the outcomes associated with the 12-acre Town Square project. Implementation will be funded with \$11.9 million from the Capital Projects Fund, a \$12 million multi-year commitment from Montgomery County, and potential contributions from the State and federal governments. Approximately \$30 million for parking garage construction will be funded with General Obligation bonds through the Parking Fund.

The Mayor and Council's goal to create a vibrant Town Center looks ahead to potential redevelopment of an additional 63 acres in the Town Center area. The FY 2005 proposed Capital Improvements Program (CIP) includes \$245,000 to create a vision and plan to redevelop the Stonestreet corridor. The goal is to establish opportunities for better utilization of properties near the Town Center and the public transportation system.

In addition, the proposed operating budget includes \$75,000 to create a vision and a plan for redevelopment of the Town Center block north of Beall Avenue. Both projects reflect the City's proactive approach to planning for additional needs and development in the Town Center.

Strategic Objectives

- Create a Town Center that will be the heart of the Rockville community and that will be distinctive, special and "uniquely Rockville"
- Ensure that Town Center is redeveloped in a manner that respects and protects surrounding neighborhoods
- Keep future development in Town Center aligned with road capacity, school capacity and other infrastructure

Expected Outcomes

- Approve the final design for the Town Square project
- Provide parking that will be distinctly "user friendly"
- Design and build a new cultural arts center
- Set the stage for redevelopment of the Stonestreet Avenue corridor (develop a vision and then develop and implement a plan to achieve that vision)
- Set the stage for redevelopment of the block north of Beall Avenue (develop a vision and then develop and implement a plan to achieve that vision)
- Develop and implement a comprehensive transportation plan for Town Center to:
 - Enhance safety and mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists
 - Protect the character and integrity of surrounding neighborhoods
 - Foster increased use of mass transit
 - Provide a local loop shuttle service to connect the Rockville Metro/MARC station, Town Center and the surrounding neighborhoods
- Explore new options for targeted senior housing in town center
- Secure additional investment by the other levels of government

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Rockville's new Town Center took a significant step forward in September 2003 with the signing of a General Development Agreement between the Mayor and Council, Montgomery County, Federal Realty Investment Trust and residential developer RD Rockville, LLC (S.J. Ross Development and DANAC Corporation).

Ensure New Development Citywide Enhances Rockville's Quality of Life

The Mayor and Council have identified several outcomes to proactively shape and manage new growth and development in the City. Their desire is to influence new development such that it contributes to the quality and character of the Rockville community and does not place undue burdens on existing neighborhoods.

The FY 2005 proposed budget responds to this goal by designating funds for multi-year special projects that aim to improve the quality of life in Rockville. This new addition to the proposed operating budget includes approximately \$1.1 million in FY 2005. The total includes \$410,000 for zoning ordinance revisions, \$215,000 for revisions to the Rockville Pike Corridor Plan and \$400,000 for a detailed study of the Twinbrook Metro Area, as well as other multi-year projects.

Strategic Objectives

- Proactively shape and manage growth and development
- Keep new growth aligned with road capacity, school capacity and other infrastructure
- Provide land use regulations and policies suitable to an urbanizing environment
- Foster sustainable development
- Transform the Rockville Pike corridor and the area around the Twinbrook Metro station into community assets

Expected Outcomes

- Adopt an adequate public facilities ordinance
- Review and revise the City's zoning ordinances
- Review and revise the City's reforestation requirements
- Review and revise the Rockville Pike Corridor Plan
- Set the stage for redevelopment of the area around the Twinbrook Metro station (develop a vision and then develop and implement a plan to achieve that vision)

Tax-Supported Debt

- Debt outstanding as of June 30, 2003: \$35.3 million (includes \$10.3 of refinanced debt paid off in Sept. 03)
- Estimated debt issuance during FY 2004: \$11.96 million
- Estimated debt issuance during FY 2005: \$5.18 million

Fund Balance Information

- The purpose of the General Fund unreserved balance is to alleviate any unanticipated budget shortfalls and to ensure the orderly provision of services to residents. The City's policy is to ensure that this balance is at least equal to 15 percent of revenue.
- The fund balance (or retained earnings) in the City's enterprise funds, such as water, sewer and refuse, serve the same function. A substantial portion of the retained earnings for these funds consist of the value of buildings and equipment.

Real Property Reassessments

No change is proposed to the property tax rate for FY 2005.

In Maryland, properties are reassessed every three years, with all properties assigned to one of the three reassessment groups. Approximately one-third of Rockville properties were reassessed for FY 2005 and therefore many homeowners and businesses will see an increase in the amount of municipal taxes paid. Any increases to the assessed value are phased in over a three-year period and homeowners are further protected by a cap that limits the increase in any one year to 10 percent of the current assessed value.

The assessed value of all Rockville real property is estimated to be nearly \$7.1 billion by the end of FY 2005, an increase of 9.99 percent from the revised estimate for FY 2004. The City estimates that approximately 70 percent of the increase is attributable to reassessments and the remainder is the result of the addition of new residential and commercial properties.

Mayor and Council Goals



The Mayor and Council's commitment to protect pedestrians included the installation of two innovative lighted crosswalks in Rockville. Mayor Larry Giammo (front, left) and members of the Mayor and Council who introduced the new crosswalk near the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center.

Improve Pedestrian and Traffic Safety

One of the Mayor and Council's top priorities is the safety of Rockville's residents, including in their homes, in public places, as pedestrians and as motorists. The Mayor and Council suggest outcomes that improve pedestrian and traffic safety. They include increased traffic and pedestrian safety enforcement by Rockville police, neighborhood access improvements, traffic calming projects and efforts to improve pedestrian safety, especially on state roads in Rockville.

The FY 2005 proposed CIP includes \$325,000 in the Pedestrian Safety /Traffic Improvements project for a variety of projects including improved pedestrian access to Beall Elementary School, sidewalk connections on Wootton Parkway, and illuminated crosswalks and countdown traffic signals throughout the City.

The City also recognizes that lighting enhances traffic and pedestrian safety, so approximately \$75,000 in the proposed FY 2005 CIP funds streetlight improvements. In addition, current resources in the Police Department will be mobilized to provide more targeted pedestrian safety enforcement.

Strategic Objectives

- Provide a safe and inviting transportation network and environment for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Address problem areas in neighborhoods where speeding and/or high volumes of automobile traffic negatively impact the character and/or safety of the neighborhood

Expected Outcomes

- Improve pedestrian safety along state roads in Rockville (in collaboration with the county and state governments)
- Continue to implement traffic-calming solutions to address speeding and traffic volumes on neighborhood streets
- Address neighborhood access issues at the most problematic intersections (such as the intersection of Edmonston Drive and Lewis Avenue)
- Enhance traffic enforcement by Rockville police

Comparison of Costs FY 2004 to FY 2005

ROCKVILLE PROPERTY TAX RATE:
UNCHANGED
FY 2004 = \$.322
FY 2005 = \$.322

NOTE: Rates per \$100 of assessed real property.

ROCKVILLE WATER RATE: \$0.08 increase
ROCKVILLE FY 2004 = \$1.99/1,000 gallons
ROCKVILLE FY 2005 = \$2.07/1,000 gallons
WSSC FY 2005 = \$3/1,000 gallons

ROCKVILLE SEWER RATE: \$0.11 increase
ROCKVILLE FY 2004 = \$3.50/1,000 gallons
ROCKVILLE FY 2005 = \$3.61/1,000 gallons
WSSC FY 2005 = \$4.05/1,000 gallons

ROCKVILLE REFUSE: \$2.50/month increase
ROCKVILLE FY 2004 = \$357/year*
ROCKVILLE FY 2005 = \$377/year*
Mont. Co. Non-Collection District
FY 2005 = \$379/year*
Mont. Co. Collection District
FY 2005 = \$321/year*

*Montgomery County, Non-Collection District includes twice per week collection, no leaf vacuuming, no special pick-ups. Rockville includes twice per week collection, leaf vacuuming, and unlimited special pick-ups. Montgomery County, Collection District includes once per week collection, leaf vacuuming, and limited special pick-ups.

Strengthen Rockville's Neighborhoods and Sense of Community

The Mayor and Council continue their effort to support and strengthen Rockville's neighborhoods, and to bolster the sense of community among residents. The Mayor and Council would like to increase citizen awareness about the zoning ordinance and property maintenance codes through the City's Code Enforcement program. Another goal is to reduce repeated code enforcement violations.

The proposed operating budget has adequate funding to support these community-strengthening efforts through existing programs including the production of educational materials about the property code in multiple languages. In addition, Code Enforcement staff will attend homeowner association meetings regularly to communicate with residents about their neighborhood needs. Teams across the four divisions of the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services also will develop plans for additional outreach efforts.

In response to concerns about the affordability of housing in Rockville, the Mayor and Council wish to examine the City's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program and look for opportunities to expand it. The new special project funds in the operating budget includes \$6,500 to explore the expansion of the City's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program. The Mayor and Council also have expressed interest in addressing affordable housing for seniors. The Mayor and Council, City staff and Town Square developers plan to work together in the coming year to assure appropriate placement of seniors in affordable housing in Town Center.

The Mayor and Council recognize the importance of drawing on Rockville's rich diversity of culture and age groups to enrich the lives of all Rockville residents. The one-time contingency is available to fund outreach and other efforts focused on the community's diversity.

Strategic Objectives

- Protect property values and ensure a consistent level of property maintenance citywide
- Enhance public safety
- Expand the stock of affordable housing and foster home ownership
- Leverage Rockville's rich diversity
- Enhance community oriented policing

Expected Outcomes

- Develop and implement a plan to:
 - Reduce the number of property maintenance violations
 - Reduce the time required to resolve property maintenance violations
 - Reduce recidivism rates among property maintenance violators
- Enhance important community-oriented police programs (such as park patrols, outreach programs to local schools, etc.)
- Explore new initiatives to expand the creation of affordable housing (with one particular focus on housing for seniors)
- Identify and implement new initiatives designed to bring together diverse cultures and age groups in our community

Enhance City Government's Performance

The Mayor and Council take seriously their responsibility to review the City government's performance, to support the provision of high-quality services, and to strive to do more with less. Another objective is to achieve best-in-class levels of customer satisfaction.

The Mayor and Council identified outcomes to implement a comprehensive project tracking system in the City and to take a closer look at the City's performance measurement program. The City Manager's Office will develop the tracking system and examine the performance measurement system. One-time contingency funds may be used to implement any changes requested by the Mayor and Council.

The City's High Performing Organization (HPO) initiative, known as LEAD, also aims to enhance performance City-wide. The City will continue to invest in training and other activities for the HPO program in FY 2005. The program encourages employees at all levels of the organization to recognize and use their leadership, management and decision-making abilities. The City is already realizing the benefits of this approach. For example, employees at all levels identified budget savings through the "Strengthening the Bottom Line" effort, employees contributed to more efficient and effective equipment purchases and employees led an effort to revise the employee performance evaluation process.

The City Manager's proposed budget also recognizes that the stewardship of our existing infrastructure and services is crucial, especially in tight budget times. For example, to begin to address infrastructure needs, approximately \$1.1 million in the proposed FY 2005 CIP supports street resurfacing. Another \$850,000 funds a contract for the repair and replacement of concrete street components, such as curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

The proposed budget also includes funds to maintain the City's trees. The budget allocates an additional \$21,000 to begin catching up on preventive tree maintenance, concentrating on removal of hazardous trees. These additional funds will not support all the City's tree maintenance needs, but increases the level of service the City can provide over the next fiscal year. Another City service area, refuse operations, currently is being studied to determine if our operations and management are well suited to provide the best possible service and value to our customers.

Strategic Objectives

- Always strive to "do more with less"
- Achieve best-in-class levels of customer satisfaction
- Hold the city government accountable for its performance
- Focus the city government's limited resources on activities and initiatives with the highest impact

Expected Outcomes

- Identify and achieve stretch targets for cost and service quality improvements
- Implement the disciplines of project management and milestone tracking for major initiatives and projects
- Identify and implement strategic performance measures in order to assess:
 - Cost performance
 - Customer satisfaction
 - Progress on major initiatives and projects
- Redirect the city government's resources, as necessary, to achieve strategic goals and objectives



The opening of retail stores and restaurants at the new Fallsgrove development in 2003 brought different businesses to the City, including the new Krispy Kreme doughnut store (left). Rockville Police (above) continued their community policing efforts by reaching out to residents and their children.